

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

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R 231527 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1239

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT CAIRO

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USUN NEW YORK 2240

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 3350

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, UNRWA, XF, IS

SUBJ: UNRWA OPERATIONS

REF: BEIRUT 2774

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: UNRWA COMGEN AND HIS DEPUTY INDICATE THEY WILL CONTINUE AVOID OPPOSITION TO NEW WEST BANK HEALTH SCHEME IN PRINCIPLE, BUT FEEL OBLIGED MAKE CONTINGENCY MEDICAL ARRANGEMENTS AT LEAST UNTIL DIMENSIONS OF PROBLEMS AND BURDENS IT WILL CREATE FOR AGENCY BECOME CLEAR. THEY HAVE ALSO COMMENTED ADDITIONALLY ON OUR INFORMAL SUGGESTION RE GENERAL REVIEW OF UNRWA'S RATION OPERATIONS AND SUPPLIED NEW INFO ON STATE OF AGENCY FINANCES, SITUATION IN LEBANON'S REFUGEE CAMPS, AND UNRWA OPERATIONS IN GAZA. END SUMMARY.

2. NEW WEST BANK HEALTH SCHEME.
BOTH RENNIE AND KONTOS HAVE CONFIRMED OUR BELIEF REPORTED REFTEL (BEING REPEATED INFO USUN) THAT AGENCY WILL NOT OPPOSE NEW ISRAELI HEALTH INSURANCE SCHEME FOR WB IN PRINCIPLE AND IS WAITING TO SEE WHAT KIND OF PRACTICAL
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PROBLEMS IT WILL POSE IN TERMS OF GREATER REFUGEE DEMANDS ON UNRWA MEDICAL SERVICES. WHILE DEMENSIONS AND PRECISE NATURE OF THESE PROBLEMS AS YET UNKNOWN, THEY FEEL AGENCY HAS NO CHOICE BUT TO MAKE ADVANCE CONTINGENCY ARRANGEMENTS TO HANDLE WHATEVER INCREASED "NEEDY" CASELOADS MAY OCCUR. THIS IS REASON FOR ARRANGEMENTS REPORTED PARA 3 JERUSALEM 277. COMGEN NOTES AGENCY CANNOT BLINDLY ACCEPT WELFARE CRITERIA USED BY ISRAELIS AND MUST SATISFY ITSELF THAT CRITERIA TO BE USED BY UNRWA IN WB ARE VALID AND REASONABLE. (AS NOTED REFTTEL, UNRWA IS IN PROCESS OF RE-EXAMINING ITS OWN WB WELFARE CRITERIA. IN LIGHT THIS RE-EXAMINATION AND ASSESSMENT OF PRACTICAL EFFECTS OF ISRAELI CRITERIA, IT MAY SET NEW CRITERIA FOR UNRWA.)

3. RELIEF OPERATIONS.

IN MEANTIME, UNRWA HAS CERTAINLY TAKEN NO DECISION REJECTING OUR INFORMAL SUGGESTIONS THAT GENERAL REVIEW BE MADE OF ITS BASIC RATION OPERATIONS, ESPECIALLY IN WB. TOMGEN SAID HE NOT SANGUINE THIS WOULD ACHIEVE VERY MUCH IN EAST JORDAN, WHERE WHOLE SUBJECT OF RECTIFICATION REMAINS OBSTRUCTED BY EMOTION, POLITICAL SENSITIVITIES AND RATHER HIGH DEGREE OF VENALITY AMONG REFUGEES AND NON-REFUGEES ALIKE. HE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT AGENCY EFFORTS TO RECTIFY ITS WB AND GAZA RELIEF ROLLS ARE PROCEEDING-- TO POINT WHERE RECENT ACTIONS TO DELETE NUMBER OF CONSPICUOUSLY AFFLUENT WB REFUGEES FROM THOSE ROLLS HAVE DRAWN PROTESTS FROM OFFICIAL JORDANIAN CIRCLES. FOR THIS REASON, AND IN ORDER AVOID POLITICAL DIFFICULTIES THAT WOULD INEVITABLY ARISE FROM ANY INDICATION THAT UNRWA'S WB POLICIES AND OPERATIONS ARE BEING DICTATED BY ISRAELI OCCUPATION AUTHORITIES, SIR JOHN BELIEVES IT ESSENTIAL THAT FUTURE AGENCY EFFORTS TO WEED OUT SELF-SUPPORTING REFUGEES FROM ITS RELIEF ROLLS SHOULD PROCEED AT CAUTIOUS, GRADUAL PACE AND THROUGH QUIET METHODS DETERMINED BY UNRWA. IN LATTER CONNECTION, HE FEELS STRONGLY THAT SUCH EFFORTS-- IF THEY ARE TO HAVE ANY CHANCE OF SUCCESS-- MUST BE PRESENTED AS PART OF UNRWA'S NORMAL, ONGOING PRACTICE OF RECTIFYING ITS RELIEF ROLLS. ANY PUBLIC INDICATION OF UNRWA DRIVE TO RECTIFY ROLLS WOULD STIR UP CONSIDERABLE OPPOSITION.

4. OPPOSITION OF LOCAL UNRWA STAFF.

COMGEN DECLARED CATEGORICALLY THAT ANY STEPS UNRWA MAY
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DECIDE TAKE (OR REFRAIN FROM TAKING) IN THIS REGARD SHALL

BE DETERMINED SOLELY ON BASIS OF ITS MANDATE, AVAILABLE
FUNDS AND ITS ASSESSMENT OF WHAT IS IN BEST INTERESTS OF
REFUGEES, ESPECIALLY THOSE FOUND IN GREATEST NEED. HE
REALIZES FULL WELL THAT M
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